United Nations E/CN.3/2012/16

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2011

Original: English

**Statistical Commission**
**Forty-third session**
28 February-2 March 2012
Item 3 (m) of the provisional agenda*
**Items for discussion and decision: efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development**

# Report of the World Bank on efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development

## Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2011/24, chap. I.B, decision 42/112), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the World Bank on efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development. The Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011, considered and endorsed a programme of action for statistics. The objectives are: (a) to fully integrate statistics in decision-making; (b) to promote open access to statistics; and (c) to increase resources for statistical systems. This global action plan, known as the Busan Action Plan for Statistics, builds on the success of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, which was endorsed by the Commission. To achieve its objectives, the Busan Action Plan outlines five steps needed to strengthen national statistical systems in developing countries and to increase the effectiveness of the support provided by development partners. As an important outcome of the Busan Forum, the Action Plan affirms the importance of establishing a global development partnership for improving national systems that produce reliable and openly available statistics to monitor progress, evaluate impact, ensure sound, results-focused public sector management and inform strategic decision-making. The Commission is invited to comment on the Action Plan's objectives and provide guidance on priorities.

* E/CN.3/2012/1.

11-64279 (E) 110112

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# Report of the World Bank on efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development

## I. Introduction

1. At the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011, Heads of State, ministers and other representatives of developing and developed countries reaffirmed their commitment to effective international development. In doing so, they took note of the need for transparent, country-led and country-level results frameworks based on a manageable number of output and outcome indicators. In support of the broad objectives of greater transparency, accountability and sustainable results, the Forum received and endorsed a global action plan for statistics (see annex). This is the first time a statistical action plan has received explicit endorsement globally at the highest political levels. The Busan outcome document (para. 18 (c)) recorded the following commitment:[1]

> We will partner to implement a global Action Plan to enhance capacity for statistics to monitor progress, evaluate impact, ensure sound, results-focused public sector management, and highlight strategic issues for policy decisions.

2. The outcome document (para. 20 (a)) also noted the need for continuing improvements in gender statistics, by committing development partners to:

> Accelerate and deepen efforts to collect, disseminate, harmonize, and make full use of data disaggregated by sex to inform policy decisions and guide investments, ensuring in turn that public expenditures are targeted appropriately to benefit both women and men.

3. Statistical capacity was a theme that ran through the discussions of results and transparency at both the technical and political levels. The improvement of official statistics under the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics was widely noted. The endorsement of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics may be seen as an expression of confidence in the ability of the international statistical community to ensure the continuation of its progress in the future.

## II. Past progress guided by the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics

4. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) was an outcome of the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2004.[2] It was endorsed by the Commission at its thirty-fifth session.[3] In the Marrakech Action Plan, national and international statistical agencies and providers of development finance were called on to work together to strengthen official statistics in developing countries. Take-up was rapid and progress under the Marrakech Action Plan has been extensive. One of the first proposed

[1] See "Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation". Available from: www.aideffectiveness.org.

[2] Action plan available from: http://siteresources.worldbank.org.

[3] See the report of the Statistical Commission on its thirty-fifth session (E/2004/24).

actions was for Governments to develop national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS). Seven years later, only 8 of 79 low-income International Development Association (IDA)-eligible countries do not have a national strategy and are not planning to prepare one. Implementation of these strategies is well under way in many countries.

5. The Marrakech Action Plan drew attention to the importance of the 2010 census round and mobilized resources to assist countries in planning and carrying out their censuses. After the 2010 census round concludes, 98 per cent of the world's population will have been counted. The Marrakech Action Plan also pointed out the need to improve the coverage and quality of indicators for the Millennium Development Goals. In 2003, only 4 countries (2 per cent) had two data points for 16 to 22 indicators; by 2006, this had improved to 104 countries (64 per cent), and to 118 countries (72 per cent) in 2009. Conversely, half of the countries had 10 or fewer indicators in 2003, while the figure dropped to just 11 per cent in 2009.[4] To improve the ability of national statistical offices to monitor their Millennium Development Goal targets using nationally produced statistics, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators conducted a series of regional workshops and reports annually on progress.[5] To improve the quality and availability of household surveys, the International Household Survey Network was established. The Network has now catalogued over 4,000 surveys conducted in developing countries and provides standards and tools for recording and archiving survey results. The complementary Accelerated Data Program has assisted over 55 developing countries in improving their practices in data collection and management and dissemination of household surveys.

6. The partnership built around the Marrakech Action Plan has increased support for statistical capacity development. Since donors began reporting in 2008, financial commitments to statistics have increased by 60 per cent to $1.6 billion. Over this period, the quality of statistics, as measured by the World Bank statistical capacity indicator, improved from its benchmark level of 52 in 1999 to 68 in 2009. There has also been progress in developing results-oriented monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks. Another indicator of increasing statistical capacity is the substantial growth in the number of countries participating in the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), which had reached 101 as at end October 2011. In December 2008, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved further enhancements to the System and supported recasting it to emphasize data dissemination and facilitate graduation to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), including through closer conformity with SDDS specifications.

7. An evaluation of the Marrakech Action Plan carried out in 2008 found that "MAPS broadly is focusing on things that remain of highest priority in the development of statistics for management of development in the poorer countries, and indications are that the MAPS partners, with their Bank counterparts, evolve their programs actively in light of new evidence about demand and about potentially viable solutions".[6] The 2008 evaluation cited examples of progress under all six

[4] Available from: www.paris21.org.

[5] See the report of the Secretary-General on development indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2012/29).

[6] Christopher Willoughby and Philip Crook, "Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics: report of an independent evaluation" (2008), p. 26. Available from http://worldbank.org.

actions. The Marrakech Action Plan was also included in a global programme review conducted by the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group in 2010. The main findings concluded that "significant progress has been achieved in the primary objective of encouraging and supporting developing countries to design National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs), but only some progress has been made in NSDS implementation". The report also noted that statistical development has begun to receive a higher priority in national development programmes. But it cautioned that "statistical capacity building programs need to involve the users of statistics more actively".[7]

8. The implementation of the Marrakech Action Plan has been monitored and influenced by the global development community. In 2005, the Paris Declaration adopted the "the core principles put forward at the Marrakech Roundtable".[8] Subsequently, the Accra Agenda for Action made broad commitments on behalf of donors and developing countries to strengthen national statistical systems; provide more data disaggregated by sex, region and economic status; and "invest in strengthening developing countries' national statistical capacity and information systems, including those for managing aid".[9] More recently, the 2009 Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics reaffirmed that concerted and coordinated actions are required to make more effective use of statistical data to support poverty reduction policies and programmes and to strengthen and sustain the capacity of statistical systems, especially in developing countries. The recent review of the implementation of the Paris Declaration found substantial progress evidenced by the fact that "high-quality results-oriented frameworks to monitor progress against national development priorities are in place in one quarter of the developing countries first surveyed in 2005, with statistics related to the Millennium Development Goals becoming increasingly available".[10]

9. Experience since 2004 suggests the following lessons:

- Rapid progress is possible and there is strong uptake by developing countries for programmes to increase their statistical capacity. However, implementing national strategies is not always straightforward and the plans are often too ambitious. Maintaining core statistical activities while responding to the wider results agenda and new, emerging data needs of decision makers remains a challenge. Additional support is needed, especially in fragile States and small island developing States. Furthermore, the capacity to use statistical information remains weak and should be addressed as part of a larger, system-wide approach to capacity development.

- There is a growing demand for disaggregated statistics to monitor and evaluate programmes at the local level. However, sex-disaggregated statistics, needed to measure results and ensure that programmes and public expenditures are

[7] Independent Evaluation Group, "Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics: Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, and Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity", *Global Program Review*, Vol. 5, Issue 3 (2011), p. 58. Available from www.globalevaluations.org.

[8] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action" (Paris, OECD, 2008), p. 7. Available from www.oecd.org.

[9] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[10] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Aid Effectiveness 2005-10: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration* (Paris, OECD, 2011), p. 16. Available from www.oecd.org.

appropriately targeted, are not systematically compiled or used; essential statistics on agricultural inputs and production are missing or outdated in a majority of developing countries; and few developing countries are equipped to manage large geographic information systems or to produce much-needed geocoded data.

- At the international level, coordination of donor support for statistical capacity development programmes remains imperfect. Despite the increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, many donor-financed projects fail to collect or preserve important statistical indicators. At the same time, new technologies are making possible innovative methods of collecting, storing and analysing data, requiring additional efforts towards creating international standards and methods for managing and disseminating large data sets.

## III. Busan Action Plan for Statistics

10. The Action Plan presented at Busan builds on the success and implementation experience of the Marrakech Action Plan. It addresses the previously identified gaps and the expanding agenda of official statistics in areas such as gender statistics and geographic information systems. The Action Plan benefited from the following significant consultations with both the international statistical community and other development actors in advance of its consideration by the delegates of the High-level Forum:

- June 2011: initial consultations with members of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) Executive Committee; the meeting of the Global Partnership on Country Systems in Manila; and meetings with representatives of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Committee on Statistics and the Conference of European Statisticians in Geneva.

- July-August 2011: a second round of consultations was conducted during the International Statistical Institute (ISI) satellite conference on statistical capacity-building in Krakow, Poland; the ISI 2011 Statistics Congress in Dublin; and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities round table in Luxembourg. In addition, the Action Plan was presented to experts in gender statistics of the Government of the United States of America, OECD, Statistics Division and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

- September-October 2011: additional consultations were held with results experts at a pre-Busan results workshop in Berlin and with national statisticians at the International Forum on Monitoring National Development in Beijing. The Action Plan was also posted on the PARIS21 website, which provided Board members and other interested parties with the opportunity to suggest revisions, and discussed by the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics.

11. The Action Plan proposes five priority areas for action that are likely to produce large and sustainable improvements in statistical capacity. In each case, programmes of action should be accompanied by indicators to monitor progress and measure results. Like the Marrakech Action Plan, the Busan Action Plan recognizes

the complementary roles of developing countries, bilateral development partners and international agencies. It encourages a coordinated system-wide approach to capacity development. Aid aligned with countries' statistical development strategies will be more effective than ad hoc, donor-initiated capacity development and data-collection efforts. Improvements in country statistical systems will further improve international statistics, while a more effective international system will provide more consistent advice and better support for national activities. The five priority areas are:

- **Action 1**. Strengthen and refocus national and regional statistical strategies with particular emphasis on improving statistical systems that address country-level development priorities. A key aim is to increase in-country capacity to respond to emerging and unforeseen needs. Strategies should be updated to reflect new challenges and opportunities and integrate international and domestic data-collection activities.

- **Action 2**. Implement standards for data preservation, documentation and dissemination that permit broader public access to statistics.

- **Action 3**. Develop programmes to increase the knowledge and skills needed to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, thus increasing transparency and accountability, and improve accessibility of statistics at the national and international levels.

- **Action 4**. Build and maintain results-monitoring instruments to track the outcomes of all global summits and high-level forums. Rigorous monitoring of global initiatives requires collaboration between national and international statistical organizations. Outcome documents should specifically recognize the need for statistical capacity development, including technical assistance, training and financial support.

- **Action 5**. Ensure that financing for statistical information is robust and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

12. The recommended actions serve to advance the goal of a statistical system that produces high-quality statistics of relevance to policymakers that are accessible to citizens and are sustainable with the resources available domestically and, where needed, from external sources. The success of the Action Plan should therefore be assessed by progress towards its overall objectives:

- **Fully integrate statistics in decision-making**. To break the cycle of poor-quality statistics leading to their underuse, which in turn leads to neglect and underfunding of statistical activities, statistical offices should be routinely engaged in planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation processes so that the statistics they produce are relevant and meet user priorities.

- **Promote wider and open access to statistics**. Timely and reliable statistics should be widely available to the public as well as to policymakers and other stakeholders, thus increasing Government effectiveness and public confidence.

- **Increase resources for statistical systems**. Continued investment is a key to breaking the vicious cycle of neglect and disuse of statistics. Financial support for national statistical systems should be integrated in development assistance programmes, with developing countries providing in-country leadership.

Donors should adopt system-wide approaches, coordinating their assistance strategies to ensure they are consistent with national priorities. But Governments should also demonstrate commitment to their statistical systems by appropriating adequate resources.

## IV. Next steps

13. Implementing the Action Plan will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors, with developing countries playing an important leadership role. Implementation steps will recognize that fragile States and small island developing States have special needs and may require different, perhaps phased, approaches to capacity development and institution-building. Implementation will also reflect the increasing diversity of development partnerships in terms of financial support, knowledge exchange and sources of technical advice. Implementation will adhere to the following criteria:

- Broad international support exists and a lead agency/partnership/institution can be identified to support in-country leadership of national implementation strategies
- In-country capacity development is the primary focus (not building international bureaucracies)
- Outcomes are identifiable, monitorable and time-bound (indicative indicators to track implementation progress are provided)
- Implementation is "bureaucracy-light" and will rely on existing partnerships, agencies and institutions

14. PARIS21 and the World Bank will prepare an implementation plan and coordinate the next steps and work with the relevant agencies to ensure that accountabilities are determined and monitorable progress indicators are established. Progress will be reported through the proposed global partnership for effective development cooperation, starting with the meeting of the OECD Working Party on Aid Effectiveness in June 2012.[11] The Statistical Commission will play an important role in ensuring that this work remains a priority for the statistical community. As such, the Commission will receive biennial progress reports for its consideration.

## V. Points for action by the Commission

15. **The Commission is invited:**

(a) **To comment on the Action Plan's objectives;**

(b) **To provide guidance on priorities.**

16. **The Commission may wish to identify opportunities for rapid implementation, measurable results and funding modalities.**

[11] See "Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation", para. 36.

# Annex

## Statistics for transparency, accountability and results: Busan Action Plan for Statistics

**(Prepared for the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Busan, Republic of Korea, 30 November-2 December 2011)**

### Executive summary

1. As the world community faces a complex array of challenges, policymakers need better statistics.

2. Statistics provide the evidence needed to improve decision-making, document results and heighten public accountability. The demand for improved statistics to monitor the Millennium Development Goals and the parallel effort to support a culture of results-based management has stimulated a decade-long effort to improve statistics. The results have been impressive but much work remains to be done.

3. This five-point Action Plan provides the direction for the decade ahead. It supports three principal objectives: (a) fully integrating statistics in decision-making; (b) promoting open access to statistics; and (c) increasing resources for statistical systems.

4. The Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness offered an opportunity to form a partnership to implement this Action Plan. As a result, partner-country statistical offices will be better able to highlight strategic issues for policy decisions, monitor progress, evaluate impact and ensure results-focused public sector management.

5. While maintaining the partner country-led approach of past efforts guided by the 2004 Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, the Busan Action Plan goes beyond the Marrakech Action Plan in many ways. It adopts a system-wide approach to capacity development in order to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring and results. It recognizes the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data and vital statistics. The Action Plan also explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of statistics.

6. The Action Plan explicitly recognizes the statistical activities necessary to support key global commitments including with respect to initiatives such as gender equity and the empowerment of women (see appendix for a sample list of statistical programmes responding to emerging global initiatives).

7. The Action Plan will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors. While it establishes priorities, it must still be translated into a set of time-bound and monitorable tasks. Implementation should be "bureaucracy-light", relying on existing partnerships, agencies and institutions. Financial support will come primarily from domestic revenues but donor support remains essential and new sources of financial assistance will be sought to supplement existing ones. The full engagement of international bodies will be crucial, especially forums that

bring together national and international experts to exchange knowledge and solve problems.

## Policymakers need better statistics

8. **Reliable and accessible statistics provide the evidence needed to improve decision-making, document results and heighten public accountability**. As the world community faces a complex array of challenges, policymakers need better statistics. Ongoing global economic and financial challenges have demonstrated the need for timely, high-quality macroeconomic and financial data. Rising food prices have differential impacts on consumers and producers that can be only understood through integrated statistics on household consumption, agricultural production and trade. Health programmes for communicable and non-communicable diseases similarly require administrative data from the health system combined with data obtained from vital registration household surveys. Further, new initiatives to address gender equality and opportunities for women will require innovative methods of data collection and analysis.

9. The demand for improved statistics to monitor the Millennium Development Goals and the parallel effort to foster a culture of results-based management so as to increase development effectiveness has stimulated a decade-long effort to improve statistics. The results have been impressive but much work remains to be done.

## The need is urgent because many gaps remain

10. **Africa may never know the impact of the global financial crisis on its poorest citizens**. Only 17 sub-Saharan African countries have collected data to measure changes in poverty in the past decade and 47 per cent of those countries have not carried out a household income or expenditure survey in more than five years.

11. **Without better statistics, opportunities for designing and implementing programme policies to improve gender equality and increase women's empowerment are constrained**. Between 2005 and 2009, 71 (out of 145) countries did not report data on the share of women in non-agricultural wage work, a Millennium Development Goal 3 indicator. Indicators of female entrepreneurship remain underdeveloped.

12. **Actions to improve food security require better and more up-to-date statistics**. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics coming from national statistical offices have been on a steady decline since the early 1980s, particularly in Africa, and official submissions from countries in Africa are at their lowest level since before 1961, with only one in four African countries reporting basic crop production data.

13. **Statistics are a matter of life and death**. In 2009, the births of 50 million children went unrecorded. They entered the world with no proof of age, citizenship or parentage. That same year, 40 million people died unnoted except by family or friends. There are no records of where they died, when they died and, more importantly, how they died. In most high-income countries, these vital events (births

and deaths) are recorded by civil registration systems, which also record marriages, adoptions and divorces; but in many developing countries, registration systems are incomplete or absent. In South Asia, only 1 per cent of the population is covered by complete vital registration records and in sub-Saharan Africa only 2 per cent (United Nations, *Population and Vital Statistics Report*, 2011). Lacking effective registration systems, countries must rely on infrequent and expensive surveys to estimate the vital statistics needed to support the core functions of Government and to plan for the future. More often, key policy decisions are made in the absence of reliable data.

## Improvements will build on past successes

14. **The need for better statistics to design, monitor and assess development programmes was recognized at the First International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in 2002**. The Second Roundtable, held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2004 endorsed the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, establishing an international agenda for supporting statistics in developing countries. The following year, the Paris Declaration adopted the "the core principles put forward at the Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results".[a] Subsequently, the Accra Agenda for Action made broad commitments on behalf of donors and developing countries to strengthen national statistical systems; provide more data disaggregated by sex, region and economic status; and "invest in strengthening developing countries' national statistical capacity and information systems, including those for managing aid".[b] More recently, the 2009 Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics reaffirmed that concerted and coordinated actions are required to make more effective use of statistical data to support poverty reduction policies and programmes and to strengthen and sustain the capacity of statistical systems, especially in developing countries.

15. The Marrakech Action Plan recommended six "short- and medium-term actions consistent with long-term, sustainable improvements in national and international statistical capacity".[c] Recognizing the essential partnership between national and international institutions, the actions were divided into those addressing national needs and a second set of actions addressing international responsibilities. Resources to support implementation of the Marrakech Action Plan came from bilateral and multilateral donors and from national budgets.

16. **Much progress has been made**. Out of the 79 low-income IDA countries, only 8 countries do not have a national strategy for the development of statistics and are not planning to prepare one. Implementing these strategies is well under way in many countries. After the 2010 census round concludes, 98 per cent of the world's population will have been counted. Since donors began reporting support for statistical capacity development in 2008, financial commitments to statistics have increased by 60 per cent to $1.6 billion over the period 2008-2010. Over 55 developing countries have improved their practices in data collection and

[a] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action" (Paris, OECD, 2008), p. 7. Available from www.oecd.org.

[b] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[c] World Bank, "Better data for better results: an action plan for improving development statistics" (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2004), p. 1.

management, and dissemination of household surveys. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal indicators conducted a series of regional workshops aimed at improving the monitoring of the Goals and reports annually on progress. Over this period, the quality of statistics, as measured by the World Bank's statistical capacity indicator, has improved from its benchmark level of 52 in 1999 to 68 in 2009; and there has been progress in developing results-oriented monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

17. **Evaluations have confirmed the effectiveness of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics**. The "Progress since Paris" report found "substantial progress" was reflected by "more partner countries hav(ing) sound national development strategies in place, and these tend(ing) to be more clearly prioritized than in 2005" along "with evidence suggesting that MDG-related statistics are becoming increasingly available at the country level".[d] An evaluation of the Marrakech Action Plan carried out in 2008 found that "MAPS focused on topics that remain of highest priority in the development of statistics in the developing countries ... to create a strong framework for dealing with the multifaceted problems of statistical development in developing countries".[e] The Marrakech Action Plan was also included in a global programme review conducted by the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group in 2010. The main findings concluded that "significant progress has been achieved in the primary objective of encouraging and supporting developing countries to design National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs), but only some progress has been made in NSDS implementation". The report also noted that statistical development has begun to receive a higher priority in national development programmes. However, it cautioned that "statistical capacity building programs need to involve the users of statistics more actively".[f]

18. Experience since 2004 suggests the following lessons:

- Rapid progress is possible and there is strong uptake by developing countries for programmes to increase their statistical capacity.[g] Yet, implementing national strategies is not always straightforward and the plans are often too ambitious. Maintaining core statistical activities while responding to the wider results agenda and new, emerging data needs of decision makers remain a challenge. Additional support is needed, especially in fragile States and small island developing States. Furthermore, the capacity to use statistical information remains weak and should be addressed as part of a larger, system-wide approach to capacity development.

- There is growing demand for disaggregated statistics and for geocoded data needed to monitor and evaluate programmes at the local level. Yet,

[d] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Aid Effectiveness 2005-10: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration* (Paris, OECD, 2011).

[e] Independent Evaluation Group, "Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics: Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, and Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity", *Global Program Review*, Vol. 5, Issue 3 (2011), p. 22.

[f] Ibid., p. 58.

[g] An indicator of this increase in statistical capacity is the substantial growth in the number of countries participating in the General Data Dissemination System, reaching 101 as at end October 2011. In December 2008, the IMF Executive Board decision favoured further enhancements to GDDS and supported recasting it to emphasize data dissemination and facilitate graduation to the Special Data Dissemination Standard, including through closer conformity to SDDS specifications.

sex-disaggregated statistics, needed to measure results and ensure that programmes and public expenditures are appropriately targeted, are not systematically compiled or used; essential statistics on agricultural inputs and production are missing or outdated in a majority of developing countries; and few developing countries are equipped to manage large geospatial information systems.

- At the international level, coordination of donor support for statistical capacity development programmes remains imperfect. Despite the increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, many donor-financed projects fail to collect or preserve important statistical indicators. At the same time, new technologies and the advent of geographic information systems are making possible innovative methods of collecting, storing and analysing data, requiring additional efforts towards creating international standards and methods for managing and disseminating large data sets.

## A renewed partnership to improve statistics

19. A partnership endorsed by the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to implement the Busan Action Plan for Statistics provides the opportunity to extend the progress made over the last decade under the Marrakech Action Plan and to provide direction for the decade ahead. The Action Plan has three principal objectives:

- **Fully integrate statistics in decision-making**. Improvements in the production of statistics are essential, but policymakers and programme managers must also understand how to use statistics effectively. Poor-quality statistics lead to their underuse, which in turn leads to neglect and underfunding of statistical activities. Statistical offices should be routinely engaged in planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation processes so that the statistics they produce are relevant and meet user priorities.

- **Promote open access to statistics**. The hallmark of transparent and accountable Governments is open access to information. Making timely and reliable statistics widely available to the public as well as to policymakers and other stakeholders increases Government effectiveness and public confidence.

- **Increase resources for statistical systems**. Continued investment is a key to breaking the vicious cycle of neglect and disuse of statistics. Financial support for national statistical systems should be integrated in development assistance programmes with developing countries providing in-country leadership. Donors should adopt system-wide approaches, coordinating their assistance strategies to ensure they are consistent with national priorities.

## Busan Action Plan for Statistics

20. The Action Plan has benefited from a thorough consultation process and has been endorsed by members of the PARIS21 partnership and other key development partners. It builds on past successes and addresses outstanding gaps, going well beyond current approaches. It draws from experience acquired since the launch of the Marrakech Action Plan and an assessment of the major factors shaping the

evolution of statistical systems. While its focus is on country capacity development through country-owned and country-led development strategies, it still recognizes the interdependence of national and international statistical activity. It proposes a manageable number of actions that can be adapted flexibly to country circumstances.

21. Like the Marrakech Action Plan, it recognizes the complementary roles of developing countries, bilateral development partners and international agencies. It encourages a coordinated system-wide approach to capacity development. Aid aligned with countries' statistical development strategies will be more effective than ad hoc, donor-initiated capacity development and data-collection efforts. And improvements in country statistical systems will improve international statistics, while a more effective international system will provide more consistent advice and better support for national activities.

22. This plan will also rely on indicators to track progress under each action. Although a work in progress, some possible progress indicators are provided under each of the five actions.

**Action 1**. Strengthen and refocus national and regional statistical strategies, with particular emphasis on improving statistical systems that address country-level development priorities. A key aim is to increase in-country capacity to respond to emerging and unforeseen needs. Strategies should be updated to reflect new challenges and opportunities and integrate international and domestic data-collection activities.

- Building on existing national plans, prioritize implementation to ensure that crucial domestic policy priorities are addressed first. Early small successes achieved through gradual implementation will help build up to larger successes at a later stage.
- Establish partnerships of national users and producers of data through communities of practice at both the national and regional levels to enhance communication and encourage innovation.[h]
- Grounded in country priorities, ensure that gender statistics are fully mainstreamed into the national statistical system. This will require improving existing data-collection approaches and developing new ones that are implemented on a regular basis. Multi-purpose household surveys will be particularly important for measurement of female entrepreneurship, time use, access to finance and gender-based violence.
- Address weaknesses in vital registration systems and data critical for monitoring programme performance, including administrative data, sex-disaggregated data and geospatial information.
- Ensure that the development of sectoral data (such as agriculture, health, education, environment and labour) is fully integrated into and synchronized with national and regional statistical strategies, not only to contribute to stronger statistical systems but also to rationalize resources and reduce the duplication of efforts across ministries at the country level.

[h] Regional communities of practice on managing for development results currently exist to serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity development.

*Possible indicators to track progress*: (a) number of national strategies for the development of statistics with clear priorities and costing for implementation; (b) countries incorporating specific plans for gender statistics in their strategies; and (c) level of "alignment" of statistical capacity development actions with the strategies.

**Action 2**. Implement standards for data preservation, documentation and dissemination that permit full public access to statistics.

- Initial efforts should be directed towards instances where statistics exist, but have not been published. Building on the success of efforts to improve access to household surveys, expand in-country capacity for data documentation and preservation, anonymization and dissemination of enterprise statistics, vital statistics and administrative data.
- Support the development of legal frameworks to encourage open access to data.
- Develop frameworks for assessing the "openness" of the statistical programmes of national and international statistical offices.
- Facilitate the dissemination of data standards and common survey methodologies for enterprise and administrative data.
- Support the implementation of global geospatial information management systems.

*Possible indicators to track progress*: (a) proportion of national websites offering free data; (b) published assessments of statistical "openness"; (c) development of a catalogue for enterprise statistics and administrative data; and (d) number of countries publishing recent census data and documentation thereof on their national websites.

**Action 3**. Develop programmes to increase the knowledge and skills needed to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, thus increasing transparency and accountability and improve accessibility of statistics at the national and international levels.

- Use new technologies and innovative methods of e-learning to share knowledge between producers and users of statistics.
- Develop programmes to increase public awareness of the role of data in policy development and tracking outcomes to empower users to more effectively use statistics.
- Ensure that technical and financial support of statistical and monitoring and evaluation systems remains aligned with national policy priorities and that statistical producers are closer to discussions on policy priorities.
- Recommend curation standards for information collected by development organizations through their research activities and development projects. Encourage implementation of the data standard of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

*Possible indicators to track progress*: (a) number of registered users of globally endorsed e-learning tools; (b) measures of advocacy material; (c) number of national statistical office websites that are updated at least weekly; (d) number of

countries maintaining and publishing up-to-date quality assurance frameworks for their official statistics; and (e) number of development partners adopting internationally accepted transparency standards.

**Action 4**. Build and maintain results-monitoring instruments to track outcomes of all global summits and high-level forums. Rigorous monitoring of global initiatives requires collaboration between national and international statistical organizations. Outcome documents should specifically recognize the need for statistical capacity development, including technical assistance, training and financial support.

- Resolutions of global summits and high-level forums should clearly state the policy issue being addressed and the key set of indicators to be developed and provide an implementation strategy for sequencing technical assistance, training and financing.
- Statistical activities required by global initiatives should be implemented with developing-country leadership, consistent with their national strategies and at a pace in keeping with other priority needs.
- Monitoring and follow-up reports should include assessments of statistical progress.
- Through the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, in the context of existing statistical capacity development initiatives and working closely with national statistical offices and other stakeholders, provide adequate support to countries to produce data based on established indicators for monitoring the progress of gender initiatives.
- Examples of other global commitments include the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and the newly established United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

*Possible indicators to track progress*: (a) share of summits and high-level meetings that specifically mention statistics/indicators; (b) share of summits that agree on a set of common indicators to measure goals and commitments; and (c) availability of "bulletin boards" or other public information sites providing complete data and metadata for monitoring global initiatives.

**Action 5**. Ensure financing for statistical information is robust and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

- International organizations and bilateral agencies should ensure financial support is sufficient, flexible and adaptable to rapidly changing in-country requirements. Donor programmes should be coordinated and aligned with the priorities agreed in national and regional statistical strategies.
- Recognize statistical capacity development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks as priorities in bilateral and multilateral institutional work programmes.
- Governance arrangements should be inclusive, reflecting the changing mix of development actors.

- In the same way that monitoring and evaluation is now seen to be a necessary part of project financing, international organizations should incorporate support for statistics in all development assistance programmes.
- Ensure that critical global initiatives — such as statistics for gender equity and women's empowerment — are adequately funded to support country requirements in developing their statistical capacity.

*Possible indicators to track progress*: (a) trends in donor funding allocations to capacity development, including levels of concentration and fragmentation; (b) share of activities relating to national strategies for the development of statistics financed through domestic contributions; and (c) number of donor/Government in-country coordination groups, instances of pooled resources, basket funds.

## Implementation

23. Implementing these actions will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors, with developing countries playing an important leadership role. Although the Action Plan establishes priorities, it must be translated into a set of time-bound implementation steps. These steps will recognize that fragile States and small island developing States have special needs and may require different, perhaps phased, approaches to capacity development and institution-building. Implementation will also reflect the increasing diversity of the development partnership in terms of financial support, knowledge exchange and sources of technical advice. Implementation will adhere to the following criteria:

- Broad international support exists and a lead agency/partnership/institution can be identified to support in-country leadership of national implementation strategies
- In-country capacity development is the primary focus (not building international bureaucracies)
- Outcomes are identifiable, monitorable and time-bound (indicative indicators to track implementation progress are provided above)
- Implementation is "bureaucracy-light" and will rely on existing partnerships, agencies and institutions

24. Financial support for statistics will come primarily from domestic revenues but donor support remains essential. It will be important to seek new sources of financial assistance — from new and prospective donor Governments, international companies and foundations — to supplement existing sources of finance. Funding instruments of bilateral agencies and multilateral institutions should be sufficiently flexible and robust to channel both existing and new financing to improve in-country statistical capacity.

25. Governance structures overseeing implementation will draw from existing institutions and frameworks. At the national level, national strategies for the development of statistics have become established practice, helping to ensure country ownership in setting improvements and providing a coordination mechanism for donor programmes and projects. These strategies will be updated to provide a framework for effective and results-oriented strategic management of the

national statistical system and for mobilizing, harnessing and leveraging both national and international resources.

26. Full engagement by international bodies will be crucial. The Statistical Commission is the highest decision-making body for international statistical activities, especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international levels. Implementation of the Action Plan and results will be regularly reported to the Commission, in compliance with its reporting policy. In addition, PARIS21 is an effective forum of donors and development partners and network to promote, influence and facilitate statistical capacity development and the better use of statistics at the national and international level.[1] To effectively support capacity development and harmonization with existing statistical organizations, systems and regional agencies should be regarded as extremely important. International agency and expert groups such as those established by the United Nations to monitor the Millennium Development Goals or to guide the development of gender statistics provide effective mechanisms for bringing together national and international experts to exchange knowledge and solve problems. These and other expert groups will play important roles in the implementation of the Action Plan.

## Conclusions

27. Implementation of the Action Plan will help fill statistical gaps of relevance to critical policy issues, while going beyond past efforts in the following important ways:

- Adopting a system-wide approach to capacity development to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring and results.
- Recognizing the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data and vital statistics.
- Explicitly supporting greater transparency and encouraging the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of official statistics.

28. As such, the Busan Forum is invited to acknowledge the importance of establishing a global partnership to support the Action Plan and encourage rapid implementation.

[1] For more information on PARIS21 activities, visit www.paris21.org.

# Appendix

## Recent/emerging statistical programmes responding to global initiatives

| *Initiative* | *Issues to address* | *Lead agency* | *Key outputs and delivery dates* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender statistics initiative | Gender data to produce the minimum set of gender indicators to support policies to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, focusing in particular on strengthening data-collection instruments — especially household surveys | Statistics Division, UN-Women, World Bank, OECD | A set of indicators to be developed and an implementation plan to collect these statistics as discussed at the October 2011 meeting of the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. This includes a list of 15 indicators focusing on employment, education and entrepreneurship |
| Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics | Critical gaps in data limit policymaking regarding nutrition, food security and rural development | FAO | Core set of indicators to be generated by national statistical systems over the next 5 to 10 years. Implementation strategy to be discussed by donors in October 2011 |
| Monitoring of vital events, including through use of information technology | Vital statistics underpin demographic estimates; vital statistics systems provide documentation of citizenship and legal status of individuals | WHO, HMN | Strengthen country information systems to ensure recording and reporting of every birth and death, with a cause of death |
| Programme on Global Geospatial Information Management | Further develop global geospatial information and promote its use to address key global challenges | Statistics Division | Integrating statistical information with spatial framework so that detailed information becomes available at local level for development planning |
| G-20 initiative to address gaps in financial indicators | Critical information gaps revealed by the global financial crisis | IMF | Reports available from www.imf.org |
| G-20 Financial Inclusion Action Plan: action 4 — improve data | Improve measurement for the purpose of promoting financial inclusion, increasing awareness of the issue, and strengthening and informing national financial inclusion strategies | Mexico, World Bank Group | Propose a core set/framework of financial inclusion indicators |
| Open Data Initiative | Expand activities to develop standardized concepts and methods for statistical data and facilitate curation, storage and accessibility of these data | World Bank | Continuous expansion, near-term objectives include additional microdata holdings, climate change data and helping countries make their data more accessible |

| *Initiative* | *Issues to address* | *Lead agency* | *Key outputs and delivery dates* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators | Preparation of data and analysis to monitor progress towards the Goals. Review and define methodologies and technical issues in relation to the indicators, produce guidelines and support countries in data-collection, analysis and reporting on Millennium Development Goals | Statistics Division | *Millennium Development Goal Report 2010* |
| The Monrovia road map on peacebuilding and statebuilding | Development of a set of peacebuilding and statebuilding indicators, combining both objective measures and measures to understand the views and perceptions of people on results achieved | International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding | Work in progress |